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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes feedback from nearly 600 recent public administration graduates regarding the professional relevance of graduate-level courses. The purpose was to provide guidelines for curriculum developers in the expanding field of public administration. Graduates of nine major Masters of Public Administration (MPA) programs were questioned about their salary level; history and nature of employment: attitudes about levels of integrity, ability, and ambition found in the public service; and social and economic mobility. Data dealing with the MPA curriculum as it related to sex, ethnicity, and career status are analyzed in detail. Career status implied attitudes toward degree programs depending upon professional experience and perceptions of course requirements depending upon one's professional specialization. The mid-career status variable accounted for a more favorable attitude toward introductory personnel and comparative administration courses, whereas sex and ethnicity variables accounted for more favorable attitudes toward finance courses. Findings indicated that budget and finance courses were judged to be most relevant by all groups. The least relevant course was identified as public personnel administration, followed closely by research methods and quantitative analysis courses, introductory courses in public administration, and courses in sub-national government. Curriculum adjustments in response to these preferences were recommended. Tables are included. (Author/DB)

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THE NEW MPA:

THOSE WHO HAVE IT,

JUDGE IT

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THE NEW MPA:
THOSE WHO HAVE IT, JUDGE IT

Nicholas Henry

Turmoil besets advanced education in public administration. The former "subfield" of political science (and, on occasion, of administrative science) now is steaming down its remarkable secession track, pulling away from old concepts, old courses, and old curricula and rolling toward new concepts, new courses, and new curricula. It is, at least for those of us on board, an exhilarating breakaway.

But where are we going? I, certainly, have no idea (but, like most travelers, am all for going there), and would look askance at those who said they know. This is not to say, however, that we ought not to search for a few guideposts along the way.

It seems to me that perhaps the single most informative guidepost in charting the future map of public administration education would be provided by those who have enjoyed, or endured, advanced course work in public administration, and who also have had opportunities to apply their educations to the "real-world" work that public administrators do. In short, we need to obtain feedback from MPA degree holders.

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This is a rudimentary requirement for any field at any time, but especially so when a field is, in effect, making decisions that will determine its very form, its paradigm, for years to come. Regrettably, few academics have bothered to find out what public administrators think about their professional educations and their feelings about how those curricula could be improved. Some limited exceptions to this rule have appeared quite recently, in 1975 and 1976; prior to those years, however, the only study of the relevance question in the MPA degree curriculum was undertaken in 1941![3]

The Present Study

To learn more about what MPA degree holders thought about their educations, in 1975 I mailed questionnaires to 1,351 graduates of nine major MPA and MPP programs across the country.[2] The programs were selected on the bases of curricular variation and regional representativeness; the population queried was limited to those degree holders who had been graduated within the preceeding five years (although, for various peculiar reasons, a handful of respondents had completed their degree requirements earlier). There were 588 useable responses received, or a response rate of 43 per cent. A major difficulty was finding respondents; a significant proportion of the questionnaires mailed were returned by the Post Office for want of a current address. Nevertheless, the survey is unique in that it is the only national study of its kind.

The questionnaire was designed to plumb several dimensions

of the MPA population: salary level; history and nature of employment; attitudes about the levels of integrity, ability, and ambition found in the public service; internship experiences; educational background; social and economic mobility; and the usual demographic data. Only a small portion of these data can be presented here, and I am concentrating on those findings dealing with the MPA curriculum as it relates to sex, ethnicity, and career status.

"Career status" is a catch-all term referring to several related questions of importance; i.e., Do those graduates who entered an MPA degree program five, or even ten years after receiving a bachelor's degree have a different perspective on their academic experiences than those who entered such programs immediately after graduation from college? Does level of authority and responsibility in the public service relate to differences of opinion on the most rewarding kind of public administration education? Does one's professional specialization bear upon his or her perceptions of course requirements? Given the fact that an unusually high proportion of MPA registrants are part-time students and mid-career professionals, information pertaining to their career status assumes an abnormal importance.

Some General Findings.

Before delving into these kinds of correlations, however, some basic findings are of interest and should be presented. For example, a plurality of respondents chose the universities that they eventually attended for the MPA degree simply because it was the closest institution to where they worked. Almost

37 per cent chose the institution at which they earned their MPA solely for this reason. Another 25 per cent chose their institutions because they offered flexibility of scheduling. Thirty-three per cent of the respondents, however, chose their institution on the basis of the status of the academic program. This high percentage may reflect the fact that a large number of respondents were from prestigious institutions, notably Berkeley and Syracuse. On the other hand, the heavy influence of such factors as proximity of the institution and flexibility of course scheduling may be accounted for by the fact that 36 per cent of the respondents were part-time students. Moreover, almost 15 per cent of the respondents had their educations funded by their agency or some similar program, while another 25 per cent financed themselves through part-time jobs, and 27 per cent financed their educations through full-time jobs. Less than 21 per cent of the respondents financed their educations through a university assistantship, fellowship, or loan. Almost 40 per cent financed themselves to some degree through their own savings or private funds, and almost 17 per cent through the G.I. Bill.

Another basic area concerned how long it took the respondents to complete their degrees. A plurality, 31 per cent, took twelve to eighteen months. The remainder took longer than a year and a half to complete their degree, and almost 30 per cent took two years or longer. Almost 82 per cent of these former students believe that the length required to attain the MPA degree should remain the same. A majority of students (almost 54 per cent) elected to take a general course

of study, and a remaining 46 per cent concentrated primarily in such specialties as organization theory, public policy analysis, urban affairs, finance and budget administration, and personnel administration in that order of popularity.

Some questions also were asked on how MPA graduates obtained their first job. Fifty-six per cent took less than a month to get their first job after completing their MPA degree requirements. A plurality, almost 22 per cent, got their jobs through a friend or connection in the government agency, but significant proportions found their jobs through formal placement services or similar programs. For example, almost 12 per cent got a job by simply answering an ad, more than 11 percent acquired a job as the result of serving in an internship capacity as part of the MPA degree program, and 9 per cent acquired a job through their MPA program's placement service. Most of the graduates, almost 34 per cent, are working in the area of policy formulation and general administration, but significant portions also are working in planning and development, evaluation and assessment programs, and budgeting and taxation units. Most of the MPA degree holders, 34 per cent, work in local government, 25 per cent work in state government, and 17 per cent are working for the federal government. Ten per cent are in private firms, and the remaining respondents are working in the military, academic institutions, or in regional units of government. Fifty-one per cent of the respondents are between the ages of 25 and 34, and 73 per cent are married; almost 5 per cent are divorced; the remainder are single.

There are indications in the data that MPA graduates represent an upwardly mobile group relative to their parents. Twenty-eight per cent of the respondents' fathers did not finish high school, and more than 22 per cent of their mothers did not complete high school. Another 26 per cent of the fathers finished high school, and 33 per cent of the respondents' mothers completed high school. Less than 16 per cent of the fathers had more than four years college education, and 9 per cent of the mothers had more than four years of college education.

The foregoing litany implies the breadth of the study, is of intrinsic interest, and no doubt will furnish a useful data base for research on the MPA degree holder. Nevertheless, the chief concern here is: What do MPA graduates think about their educational experience? Or, specifically, which courses have MPA degree recipients found to be the most and least relevant to their subsequent jobs?

Who Likes and Dislikes What Courses, When, and Why?

There are some variations on opinions concerning curricular relevance when we break down the data according to selected characteristics of the respondents. The following tables on course relevance posit nine broad categories of courses. Considerable care was taken to assure accurate responses on this sensitive topic. First, questions dealing with least and most relevant courses were open-ended; respondents rank ordered by title the three specific courses that they had taken in their programs which they felt were the least and most valuable. These course titles then were collapsed into

the nine categories used in the following tables. Most of the categories are self-explanatory although "Substantive Policy Analysis" perhaps should be distinguished from the category of "Quantitative Methods"; the former deals with courses which appear to be largely descriptive and which focus on a particular issue or public problem (e.g., Science and Public Policy), while the latter deals with techniques and methods of policy analysis.

Table 1 shows the response to questions on course relevance by sex and the total response of all respondents. The overall data are surprising. That traditional mainstay of public administration, public personnel administration, is clearly perceived by all respondents as being the least relevant to their subsequent jobs of all course areas; fully 13 per cent ranked it as the least relevant course. It is followed closely by research methods and quantitative analysis courses, introductory courses in public administration, and courses in sub-national government (i.e., federalism, state and local governments, and urban research).

The course area adjudged to be the most relevant is budgeting and finance, with more than 21 per cent of the respondents identifying it as the most valuable course. It is followed closely only by organization theory, although the area of sub-national government is a clear third; public personnel administration ranks a distant fourth. (The ubiquitous catch-all category of "other" leads all categories as both least and most relevant in this and the following tables; it, of course, must be regarded as self-defining.)

Table 1. Least and Most Relevant Courses by Sex and by Total Response

Sex	Course Rating	Introductory P.A., Administrative Process & Theory (%)	Finance; Accounting; Taxation; Budgeting (%)	Quantitative Methods; Research Methods; Statistics; EDP (%)	Sub-national Government, e.g., Federalism; State & Local; Urban (%)	Substantive Policy Analysis, e.g., Science & Government; Business & Government; Environmental Administration (%)	Comparative and Development Administration (%)	Personnel; Manpower Management; Labor Relations (%)	Organization Theory & Development; Human Relations; Organization Behavior (%)	Other, e.g., Planning Sociology, Political Science, Economics, Public Works, Thesis, etc. (%)	Row Totals (N)
Male (84.5%)a	Least Relevant	10.3	7.5	12.1	9.8	3.7	4.6	13.2	8.3	30.5	348
	Most Relevant	6.0	20.8	5.6	9.4	5.6	1.2	8.0	18.8	24.6	414
Female (14.5%)a	Least Relevant	13.3	6.7	15.0	15.0	3.3	8.3	11.7	8.3	18.3	60
	Most Relevant	5.6	25.0	8.3	9.7	2.8	2.8	5.6	22.2	18.1	72
Total (100%)a	Least Relevant	10.7	7.3	12.6	10.4	3.6	5.1	13.1	8.2	29.1	413
	Most Relevant	5.9	21.2	5.9	9.4	5.1	1.4	7.7	19.6	23.8	491

a. Indicates percentage of total sample (N=588).

Sex, as someone once noticed, does make a difference, and attitudes about curricular relevance in public administration are no exception. Almost 15 per cent of the survey's respondents were women, and this is a figure roughly comparable to the data accumulated in the annual NASPAA surveys, which indicate that about 13 per cent of public administration students are women.[3] Table 1 indicates that women relish courses in finance even more than men--significantly more so, in fact. They also like organization theory courses more than men, but hold greater antipathy toward courses dealing with quantitative methods, sub-national government, and introductory material than do men.

Table 2 analyzes the same course preferences by ethnicity and race. As in the case with women, the ratios of minority respondents in the survey correspond approximately with those ratios indicated by preceding NASPAA surveys of public administration programs. More than 6 per cent of the respondents were black and 1.4 per cent were Chicano. The NASPAA studies indicate that less than 7 per cent of the field's students are black and 2 per cent are Chicano. Both this survey and the NASPAA efforts indicate smatterings of Native Americans and Asian Americans in public administration, i.e., less than 1 per cent.[4]

It is apparent from Table 2 that dramatic differences of opinion exist between blacks and whites over the issue of course relevance. A quarter of the blacks surveyed ranked their quantitative analysis and research methods courses as the least relevant to their subsequent jobs, while less than half

Table 2: Least and Most Relevant Courses by Ethnicity/Race

Race	Course Rating	Introductory P. A.; Administrative Process & Theory (%)	Finance; Accounting; Taxation; Budgeting (%)	Quantitative Methods; Research Methods; Statistics; EDP (%)	Sub-national Government, e.g., Federalism; State & Local; Urban (%)	Substantive Policy Analysis, e.g., Science & Government; Business & Government; Environmental Administration (%)	Comparative and Development Administration (%)	Personnel; Manpower Management; Labor Relations (%)	Organization Theory & Development; Human Relations; Organization Behavior (%)	Other, e.g., Planning Sociology, Political Science, Economics, Public Works, Thesis, etc. (%)	Row Totals (N)
White (88.4%)a	Least Relevant	10.8	7.0	11.7	11.1	3.8	5.4	13.6	8.4	28.2	369
	Most Relevant	5.3	20.5	6.2	9.6	5.0	1.6	7.1	20.3	24.4	436
Black (6.1%)a	Least Relevant	5.0	10.0	25.0	5.0	5.0	00	5.0	00	45	20
	Most Relevant	16.7	26.7	6.7	10.0	3.3	00	13.3	3.3	20.0	30
Other Minorities b (2.4%)a	Least Relevant	9.1	9.1	36.4	00	00	9.1	00	18.2	18.2	11
	Most Relevant	10.0	20.0	00	10.0	10.0	00	20.0	20.0	10.0	10
Total All Minorities (8.5%)a	Least Relevant	6.5	9.7	29.0	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	6.5	35.5	31
	Most Relevant	15.0	25.0	5.0	10.0	5.0	00	15.0	7.5	17.5	40

a. Indicates percentage of total sample (N=588). b. They are: Spanish surnamed: 1.4%, N=8; Asian Americans: 0.7%, N=4; Native Americans: 0.3%, N=2

that percentage of whites felt the same about this course area. Blacks also tended to dislike finance courses more than whites. Blacks, however, indicate real enthusiasm for finance, even as some of them disparage the area; it is by far the most favored course amoung blacks, with almost 27 per cent ranking it as most relevant. It is also of note that blacks show a markedly heavier preference than whites for introductory courses in the field, and show real variances in viewpoint over personnel courses. Blacks seem to relate to personnel courses much more than whites, which may reflect subject matter in these courses (e.g., affirmative action) that blacks find to be of more personal relevance than do whites.

Because of the relatively small numbers of other minority respondents, there is little need to elaborate beyond the tabulated data presented. Suffice it to note that their responses largely appear to parallel those of blacks, especially in that they have found quantitative methods courses to be of relatively little use in their jobs.

If traditions were to be followed in this paper, this would be the appropriate point at which to introduce the basic demographic variable of age. But, in the case of public administration education, age provides less insight than other dimensions which relate closely to age. Notable in this respect is mid-career status, or the career point at which a respondent decided to enter an MPA degree program.

The NASPAA studies (as well as this survey) indicate that a majority of MPA students are holding down full- or part-time jobs while they take courses toward the MPA degree,

that the average MPA student is significantly older than most graduate students, and that large numbers of MPA students were out of school for a number of years before re-entering college for their degree. Speculation on how these intertwining factors affect the MPA student's views on curricular relevance and worth is rife in academic circles, but hard data are non-existent. Perhaps the single most focused variable which addresses this facet of the MPA curriculum is that of mid-career status, if for no other reason than that it tends to correlate with age and employment. MPA degree holders who re-entered college for their degree after a few years in the "real world" tended to be both older and full- to part-time public administrators while they earned their academic credentials.

Mid-career status thus is a variable of peculiar importance to public administration education, and Table 3 considers it. Those degree recipients who entered their MPA programs immediately after receiving their bachelor's degrees are distinguished from those mid-career degree holders who entered one to five years after receiving an undergraduate degree, and those who entered a program six years or later after receipt of their bachelor's.

Finance and organization theory courses cut across all mid-career dimensions as the most relevant areas. Interestingly, courses in organization theory, personnel, comparative, and introductory public administration steadily increase in their percentages of most relevant responses as we move from those degree holders who entered their MPA programs with little or no prior experience toward those who entered their academic

Table 3: Least and Most Relevant Courses by Mid-Career Status

When MPA Occured in Career	Course Rating	Introductory P.A., Administrative Process & Theory (%)	Finance; Accounting; Taxation; Budgeting (%)	Quantitative Methods; Research Methods; Statistics; EDP (%)	Sub-national Government, e.g., Federalism; State & Local; Urban (%)	Substantive Policy Analysis, e.g., Science & Government; Business & Government; Environmental Administration (%)	Comparative and Development Administration (%)	Personnel; Manpower Management; Labor Relations (%)	Organization Theory & Development; Human Relations; Organization Behavior (%)	Other, e.g., Planning Sociology, Political Science, Economics, Public Works, Thesis, etc. (%)	Row Totals (N)
Immediately After Undergraduate Degree (43.2%)a	Least Relevant	12.8	5.6	10.6	10.1	3.4	4.5	14.0	8.9	30.2	179
	Most Relevant	5.1	22.3	6.5	11.2	6.0	0.9	6.0	16.7	25.1	215
1-5 Years After Undergraduate Degree (31.1%)a	Least Relevant	9.8	7.6	16.7	11.4	5.3	4.5	14.4	9.1	21.2	132
	Most Relevant	5.9	22.4	7.2	9.9	3.9	1.3	7.9	21.7	19.7	152
6 Years or More After Undergraduate Degree (25.8%)a	Least Relevant	6.4	9.6	10.6	10.6	2.1	7.4	9.6	6.4	37.2	94
	Most Relevant	7.8	18.3	3.5	5.2	4.3	2.6	10.4	22.6	25.2	115

a - Indicates percentage of total sample (N=588)

programs only after gaining relatively substantial experience. There is a nominal reverse effect with regard to courses in finance, quantitative methods, sub-national government, and policy analysis.

In brief, there seems to be clear pattern regarding the mid-career status variable. Those with professional experience have very different views on curricular relevance than those without it. Most notable, perhaps, is that respondents boasting substantial administrative experience before going back to school are the most favorably predisposed toward introductory, personnel, and comparative administration courses, and it is these courses that come out wanting on virtually every other analytical dimension. The experience factor does make a difference in one's education; how academics are to react to that factor in formulating public administration curricula - if, indeed, they can - is going to be a difficult challenge.

Another major aspect of the career status variable is the area of public administration in which a degree holder works, such as personnel or budgeting. It should follow, for example, that the opinions of an MPA recipient who is working in the area planning would be of particular interest to those public administrationists who are developing planning curricula.

Table 4 illustrates this aspect, and correlates least and most relevant course areas by the respondents' current areas of professional specialization. Areas of specialization were determined in a manner similar to that used to categorize course areas; respondents were asked to complete open-ended

Table 4: Least and Most Relevant Courses by Employment Specialty

Employment Specialty	Course Rating	Introductory P.A., Administrating Process & Theory (%)	Finance; Accounting; Taxation; Budgeting (%)	Quantitative Methods; Research Methods; Statistics; EDP (%)	Sub-national Government; e.g., Federalism; State & Local; Urban (%)	Substantive Policy Analysis, e.g., Science & Government; Business & Government; Environmental Administration (%)	Comparative and Development Administration (%)	Personnel; Manpower Management; Labor Relations (%)	Organization Theory & Development; Human Relations; Organization Behavior (%)	Other, e.g., Planning; Political Science, Economics; Public Works, Thesis, etc. (%)	Row Totals (N)
Personnel (10.7%)a	Least Relevant	11.5	15.4	11.5	15.4	11.5	3.8	7.7	3.8	19.2	26
	Most Relevant	8.8	14.7	2.9	11.8	11.8	0.0	17.6	17.6	14.7	34
Finance/ Budgeting/ Taxation (15.3%)a	Least Relevant	14.3	4.8	2.4	14.3	2.4	7.1	14.3	16.7	23.8	42
	Most Relevant	5.8	38.5	5.8	7.7	7.7	1.9	5.8	9.6	17.3	52
Program Evaluation (16.3%)	Least Relevant	1.5	9.1	9.1	18.2	0.0	4.5	22.7	2.3	29.5	44
	Most Relevant	7.4	14.8	11.1	5.6	5.6	0.0	3.7	29.6	22.2	54
Planning (17.7%)a	Least Relevant	13.0	5.6	4.8	9.3	0.0	1.9	14.8	5.6	35.2	54
	Most Relevant	6.5	16.1	4.8	24.2	4.8	3.2	6.5	17.7	16.1	62
General Management (35.0%)	Least Relevant	11.5	4.1	15.5	3.8	4.7	6.8	10.1	9.5	29.1	148
	Most Relevant	3.7	24.2	5.0	5.6	3.7	.6	7.5	25.5	24.2	161
Miscellaneous (11.7%)a	Least Relevant	3.5	12.8	12.8	4.3	6.4	2.1	10.6	12.8	29.8	47
	Most Relevant	11.5	9.8	6.6	8.2	3.3	4.9	11.5	14.8	29.5	61

a. Indicates percentage of total sample (N=508)

b. Employment specialties include the following categories of professional areas:
"Personnel" includes 3.4 per cent of the respondents who identified themselves as working in manpower management and human relations.
"Program Evaluation" includes 4.4 per cent of the respondents who identified themselves as working in scientific R & D. areas.
"Planning" includes 2.6 per cent of the respondents who identified themselves as working in community relations.
"General Management" includes 1.5 per cent of the respondents who identified themselves as working in intergovernmental relations.
"Miscellaneous" includes respondents in the following categories:
Public health: 4.4%
Social work: 2.7%
Public works: 2.6%
Public safety: 2.0%

questions, and their responses were collapsed according to five broad commonalities, plus a miscellaneous category which included the relatively small numbers of respondents in public works, health, and safety.

The tabulations are revealing. People in personnel administration, expectedly, tend to like personnel courses and see them as being relevant to their work. Also to be expected is the fact that an equal proportion of personnel administrators, almost 18 per cent, believe organization theory, development, and behavior courses to be useful in what they are doing. Personnel types clearly dislike budgeting and sub-national government courses.

"Budgeteers", as Allen Schick is wont to call them, appear to adore budgeting courses; nothing else even comes close to the whopping plurality (almost 40 per cent) that the area commands as the budgeteers' most pertinent course area. Organization theory courses rank a lagging second with less than 10 per cent. Finance types also find organization theory least germane (almost 17 per cent of them), but personnel, introductory, and sub-national government courses are right behind in this respect, with scores of more than 14 per cent each.

Professionals in the growing and increasingly modish field of program evaluation also have some interesting opinions on the relevance of their course work. More than 22 per cent of them find organization theory courses most pertinent to their work, but almost 30 per cent take a radically contrary view, rating the area least relevant. The area of relevant

courses for this group which one might anticipate as being ranked quite high, quantitative methods, unpredictably ranks a poor third as most germane, while budgeting comes in at a relatively strong second with almost 15 per cent. Moreover, significantly less of the program evaluators rate budgeting courses least relevant -- only 9 per cent.

The fourth professional group, the planners, are unique in that they hold courses in state and local government, urban, and federalism in high esteem; about a quarter of them give the sub-national area highest marks, and relatively few rank it as least relevant. It is followed by courses in organization theory and budgeting. Interestingly, the nation's planners with MPA degrees have the least use for quantitative methods courses. Does this pattern indicate a predilection among our planners for "aesthetic" values as opposed to "hard-nosed" administration?

Finally, the plurality of respondents who are in "general management" also have definite opinions about their MPA experience. More than a quarter of them value organization theory courses equally highly. Half of these respondents, in short, clearly see courses dealing with hierarchy, bureaucracy, behavior, and money as most relevant to their jobs. Yet, numbers are not particularly vital to them; quantitative analysis courses hold the title of least relevant for the general administrators. Personnel courses also do not fare well.

In summary, courses in budgeting and organization theory and behavior emerge as reasonably well rated areas by all

professional groups. Personnel, quantitative methods, and sub-national government courses, overall, tend to be rated as least relevant by most groups of specialists. There are exceptions, of course: personnel administrators appreciate their personnel courses, budgeteers treat quantitative methods with comparative civility, and planners have found their state and local courses useful. Introductory public administration courses are not rated outstandingly by any group, but this is a predictable pattern -- almost, indeed, a self-defining one, as specialists in a particular field of expertise logically would not rate a generalist, overview course area as most relevant to their specialty. Comparative and development public administration courses reveal no especial pattern one way or another, a phenomenon which seems to reflect the fact that relatively few respondents had enrolled in these courses.

A factor clearly related to the area of expertise is that of authority. Does level of responsibility in a bureaucracy influence how one perceives the subsequent utility of course work on the job?

Rather than relying on salary level to determine a respondent's level of responsibility and authority in the bureaucracy, which seems unduly artificial a measure, the respondent was asked to indicate how many employees he or she supervised. The range was substantial, but for the sake of workability the following categories were used for analytical purposes:

1. A relatively <u>low</u> level of responsibility was indicated if the respondent stated that he or

she supervised "0" personnel; 200 respondents (37.9 per cent) so indicated.

2. A relatively medium level of responsibility was indicated if the respondent stated that he or she supervised 1 to 10 personnel; 204 respondents (38.6 per cent) so indicated.
3. A relatively high level of responsibility was indicated if the respondent stated that he or she supervised 11 or more personnel; 124 respondents (23.5 per cent) so indicated.

An analysis of course relevance using these three categories of authority level alone indicates absolutely nothing. No pattern emerges that even makes presenting a table worthwhile. Nevertheless, when these authority levels are matched with areas of employment specialty, some fascinating results occur. These results are relatively isolated, however, so I shall not burden the reader by presenting a full-blown table that would be considerably more complex than the preceding one. A brief description of some of the more interesting findings will suffice instead.

Personnel administrators, when categorized by supervisory level, show considerably less unanimity in their enthusiasm for their personnel courses than Table 4 indicates. Personnel types who supervise no one are most inclined to see their personnel courses as least relevant to their work -- 20 per cent of this group so perceives them as being least relevant. This is not the case, however, when personnel people begin moving up the ladder; not a single respondent in personnel

administration who is in the next two levels of authority rates personnel courses as least pertinent. Personnel administrators also display an unusual (bizarre?) pattern of response in that almost a third of them who supervise no one, and nearly 17 per cent of them who are responsible for 11 or more employees, rate their courses in finance as most relevant. Only 10 per cent of those with a medium level of authority (i.e., 1 to 10 supervisees) rate their finance courses as most relevant. Personnel people also indicate a marked and growing appreciation of organization theory as they go up the organization; 25 per cent of those with low levels of authority accord that area highest marks, while almost 42 per cent of the high supervisory level rates it as most relevant.

Budgeteers and programs evaluators show no firm patterns of response, other than a mutual and general appreciation of their courses in both finance and quantitative methods.

Planners, who, as a group, stand relatively alone in their high evaluation of courses on sub-national governance, display a clear and widening disenchantment with these courses as they assume greater levels of authority. Almost a third of the planners with low levels of authority cite sub-national courses as most relevant to their work, a proportion that reaches zero by the time planners attain the highest level of responsibility. Also, planners gain a greater appreciation of their quantitative analysis courses as they move up, with more than 30 per cent of the low authority group rating this area as least relevant, but none of

the highest level respondents so ranking it.

Public administrators in the field of general management are remarkable in their consistency. With scant deviation, this group accords high marks to its budgeting and organization theory course areas irrespective of supervisory level.

Overall, in fact, budgeting and finance courses command the most respect among all practitioner areas, and it is closely followed by courses in organization theory, development, and behavior, regardless of supervisory status. Level of authority, by itself, elicits no discernable pattern, although introductory public administration courses and finance courses appear to gain nominally in their ratings as most relevant as respondents acquire increased levels of responsibility. But even this generalization is clouded and extremely tentative.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The data presented here are reasonably conclusive. MPA degree holders like finance and organization theory courses. They do not like personnel administration, quantitative methods, sub-national government, and substantive public policy courses, although significant numbers of respondents do show a clear appreciation for these courses. Nobody much cares about introductory and comparative public administration one way or another.

The preceding paragraph is deliberately harsh and intentionally blunt. But, at root, it does summarize the findings of the survey as they pertain to curricular relevance.

Do the findings portend radical change for the MPA

curriculum? Likely not, but they do, perhaps, provide some logic for selected adjustments. Why? Because the last (1974) NASPAA study[5] indicates that the "typical" MPA program is at variance with certain viewpoints of those who are in the most advantageous position to judge its efficacy: the public officials who have been there.

Consider. The 1974 NASPAA study states that, while organization theory courses are offered most frequently in the nation's MPA degree programs, and are required of students on a second level of frequency, budgeting and finance courses rank relatively low both in terms of being offered and of being required as part of the core curriculum. Finance courses are ranked at the fourth level of frequency among those course areas that are offered. A finance course is required in only 37 programs; four other course areas are required by greater numbers of programs.

More disturbing, perhaps, is the fact that a number of course areas which are offered with high levels of frequency, or are required of all students by large numbers of programs, were cited fairly consistently by the respondents to this survey as being comparatively less relevant to their jobs. For example, quantitative methods is the most frequently required course area, according to the NASPAA study, with more than two-thirds of the responding institutions requiring it; introductory and public policy courses also are required more frequently than budgeting courses (although less frequently than organization theory courses). Policy analysis courses rank only after organization theory courses as the

most frequently offered, and are followed closely by courses in sub-national government.

My point is that possibly some curricular adjustments are in order. To consider such adjustments is a sign of health in a field -- and public administration, fortunately, is a field possessing considerable health, at least if the responses to this survey are any indication. While many of the respondents implicitly indicated that some curricular revisions may be warranted, it is also comforting to know that 70 per cent of the respondents found courses taught by public administration faculty, in contrast to those taught by faculty in other departments, to be the most relevant to their subsequent jobs. More than 93 per cent of the respondents would recommend the MPA degree program to others.

The discipline of public administration, in sum, has a deep reservoir of support in the field. It can afford to innovate.

NOTES

1. The exceptions are George Grode and Marc Holzer, "The Perceived Utility of MPA Degrees," Public Administration Review, 35 (July/August, 1975), pp. 403-402, and Michael A. Murray, "Education for Public Administrators," Public Personnel Management, 5 (July/August, 1976), pp. 239-249. The study conducted in 1941 is by George A. Graham, Education for Public Administration, Chicago: Public Administration Service (Published for the Committee on Public Administration of the Social Science Research Council), 1941.

   The studies, while quite useful are relatively restricted in their scope. The Grode and Holzer study covered a total of 132 respondants, most of whom were from New York and New Jersey. The Murray study is a pre-test of an upcoming survey to be conducted by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), and is based on questionnaires obtained from 70 respondents. The Graham study analyzed the opinions of graduates from seven public administration programs. In constrast, the data presented in this article are drawn from a national survey of almost 600 respondents who were graduated recently from Master of Public Administration and Master of Public Policy Degree Programs.

2. MPA and MPP recipients who received the questionnaire had been graduated from the following institutions: San Diego State University, University of California at Berkely, University of Colorado, Georgia State University, Princeton University, City University of New York, the State University of New York at Albany, Syracuse University, University of Pittsburgh, University of Texas, University of Georgia, and University of Kansas. Relevant officials of these institutions were most cooperative in supplying lists of their alumni.

3. Nicholas Henry, Public Administration and Public Affairs (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 46. Percentages in Henry were derived from: National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), Public Affairs and Administration Programs, 1971-72 Survey Report (Washington, D. C. : NASPAA, 1972), and Graduate School Programs in Public Affairs and Public Administration, 1974 (Washington, D. C.: NASPAA, 1974).

4. Henry, op.cit. The NASPAA Studies of public administration programs and their enrollments provide a useful check on the demographic accuracy of the data presented here. It is gratifying that the two sets of data are extremely similar as they pertain to the proportions of both women and minorities in public administration. I should note here that 3.2 per cent of the total sample either did not respond, or responded in an unusable manner to questions concerning ethnicity, so the germane percentages do not total 100 per cent.

5. The following two paragraphs are based on data obtained in NASPAA (1974), op.cit., p. 3.